



FOUR MARKS PARISH COUNCIL

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

1. POLICY STATEMENT

Four Marks Parish Council (the Council) is committed to promoting an equal opportunities approach in every aspect of Council business including employment. It is important to the Council as a community leader and advocate to embrace diversity and ensure that everyone has access to the Council and that all individuals are treated fairly. The Council will comply with all its statutory duties, in terms of service provision and employment, actively opposing all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination.

The Council will have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

2. LEGAL BASIS

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) applies to public bodies and others carrying out public functions. It ensures that by complying with the legislation, consideration is given to how different people will be affected by the activities, policies and services provided. This legislation conveys a duty on the Council to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, or any other conduct that is prohibited in the Act.

The Act states that no individual will be directly or indirectly discriminated against on the basis of the following 'protected characteristics'. The protected characteristics defined by the Equality Act 2010 are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin)

In addition to this, the Public Sector equality duty came into force in April 2011¹ and dictates that public bodies will advance the equal opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

3. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to follow the legislation and provide equal opportunities and advancement to all employees, with an exception on a case-by-case basis if there is a genuine occupational qualification or another factor for which a different approach can be objectively justified. Any such justification must be lawful, proportionate, and supported by evidence.

The Council will also ensure an equality of opportunity in the provision of services and access to Council facilities.

This equality policy underpins all policies, procedures, and strategies, therefore providing a strong foundation for equality and diversity within the Council, its organisation, its interaction with the wider community and all of the services that it provides.

4. COMMITMENTS AS AN EMPLOYER

All employees will be treated fairly and equally. Selection for employment, promotion, training, remuneration or any other benefit will be based on aptitude, ability, and objective job-related criteria. All employees will be encouraged to develop their full potential to maximise the efficiency of the Council. If there is a vacancy, the Council will ensure that advertising complies with this policy both in content and placement to promote access to all.

The Council commits to the following

- Every employee is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all.
- No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.
- Training, development, and progression opportunities will be available to all staff.
- Employment practises will be reviewed to ensure fairness.
- Breaches of this policy may be addressed under the Council's Disciplinary Policy, depending on the seriousness and circumstances of the case.
- To have a robust complaints procedure in place, namely the Council's Grievance Policy which enables employees to complain about discrimination or harassment.

5. COMPLAINTS AND ENFORCEMENT

Employees who believe they have been subjected to discrimination, harassment, or victimisation should raise their concern as soon as reasonably practicable in accordance with the Council's Grievance Policy.

Complaints will be investigated promptly, fairly, and confidentially by an appropriate and independent person or committee, with findings reported to the Council.

6. COMMITMENTS AS A PROCURER OF GOODS AND SERVICES

¹ S.149 Equality Act 2010

When the Council acts as a client for third party contractors, it will act within the Act and not discriminate against in researching contractors or obtaining and presenting tenders. All information about third parties will be redacted on initial presentation to the Council so that it can operate without bias or discrimination on any basis.

The Council will take reasonable steps to ensure that its procurement processes are fair, transparent, and compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

Once a third party contractor has been instructed, or goods and services have been obtained for any Council business, the Council will assume that the contractor or company in question complies with the Act and will not tolerate any breach from anyone working for or on behalf of the Council.

7. EQUALITY IN SERVICE DELIVERY

The Parish Council is committed to taking any steps that it can to promote a socially inclusive community by

- Identifying any barriers that different groups may face to participation in community life.
- Respecting diversity within the community.
- Listening and responding to the views of the community through appropriate consultation and participation which are accessible to all.
- Delivery of services that are of high quality and accessible.
- In the promotion of events and meetings, consider methods of reaching the wider community.
- *The Council will consider reasonable adjustments to enable access to services and participation where required.*
- Ensuring that where available, all staff and Council members have access to equality and diversity training and relevant resources.

8. COMMITMENT

Four Marks Parish Council will comply with both the current and future legislation referring to equality and diversity. The Council will keep this policy under regular review to ensure ongoing compliance with legislation and best practice. The Council will publicise this policy on the website and will highlight it in recruitment and relevant official documentation.